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PRESS CONFERENCE BY
THE HONORABLE HENRY A. KISSINGER
SECRETARY OF STATE
FOLLOWING THE CONFERENCE OF TLATELOLCO
MEXICO CITY, MEXICO
FEBRUARY 23, 1974

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I will move very quickly to your questions. Let me make a few general comments first.

To begin with, on behalf of all my colleagues on the American delegation, I would like to thank the Government of Mexico, especially President Echeverria and Mr. Rabasa, for the spirit with which they called this Conference and the extraordinary manner in which it was organized, and for the progress to which they contributed in the relationship of the countries of the Western Hemisphere. We came here very much aware of the concern of our friends in Latin America and in the Caribbean, that the U.S. had not paid sufficient attention to their problems. Our basic purpose was to start a new dialogue and therefore yesterday we went through the agenda of Bogota point by point, giving our reaction and the possibilities of achieving them. It has been our view as well as that of all of my colleagues, the Foreign Ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean, that our meeting here should start a process and not another proclamation that would be forgotten a few months after it was issued. I believe we are on the way to accomplishing this, and I believe that I speak for my colleagues, but I certainly speak for myself when I express our gratification for having had this opportunity, and our conviction that what was started here will lead to a new relationship between the US and Latin America and the Caribbean. Having said this, I'll take your questions.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, could you define for us if there is no such definition after this Conference is over — the characteristics, the perspectives of the essential characteristics of the change that may take place in the relations of the Hemisphere as a result of the meeting, and the attitude and the limitations of the delegations attending this meeting with regard to the discussion of the agenda programmed for this conference?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: What is growing out of this Conference is a better comprehension of the problems and challenges that we in the Western Hemisphere face. Secondly, there has grown out of the Conference a determination to deal with these problems cooperatively and in a spirit of solidarity. We have recognized that many of these issues require more careful detailed study that we could give at this meeting. We are therefore going to start mechanisms that will enable us to continue working on these problems, and we are going to meet at regular intervals at

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various levels to give effect to this determination. The attitude of the delegation at the meeting has been extraordinarily constructive. We did not repeat the conventional platitudes. Our friends from Latin America and the Caribbean did not hesitate to tell us honestly what their concerns were, and this is what the meeting was all about. For us to pretend that there are not concerns in Latin America would have been an insult to the intelligence of everyone assembled here. We discussed in frankness and we on the US delegation, backed up by one of the most distinguished Congressional delegations that has attended any international conference, stated honestly what we believe it is possible to do, what it will take immediately, what it will take a longer time to achieve, and what under the present circumstances we do not perceive can be done at all. I come away with a spirit of great confidence that we have started a new relationship, and I am glad to express on this occasion my appreciation for the constructive attitude shown by every single delegation at the meeting.

QUESTION: When you speak about a historic community for Latin America and the US, do you mean that together you will receive the benefits and also confront the world conflicts?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: First, let me make clear what we mean by the word "community." We don't mean a juridical structure with formal rules that require formal support. For example, the US delegation put on the agenda of the Conference two topics: the energy crisis and a review of international affairs. We did this not in order to obtain the approval of the other countries at this Conference. We did it in the spirit that the US, with its global concerns, was engaged in many problems around the world whose consequences would affect Latin America and the Caribbean, and that having the privilege of being assembled with our colleagues of Latin America and the Caribbean they were entitled to hear our view, what our plans were, and what our considerations were. We did not ask them for joint action or endorsement. Now with respect to the consultation we foresee, we have no intention of forming a political bloc. It is not our intention to create an obligation for mutual political support. It is our intention to give some reality to a relationship that has existed for generations, that has led to the Organization of American States and that indeed has brought us together here — the Foreign Ministers of all countries of the Western Hemisphere, with the exception of Canada. This means that as far as the US is concerned we have a special obligation to take seriously the concerns of our friends from Latin America and the Caribbean. It means that we will make serious efforts to meet their legitimate complaints and to listen to all of their concerns in a spirit of cooperation. It means also that we are prepared in international forums before we make final decisions to listen to the views of our colleagues from Latin America and the Caribbean. As far as the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are concerned, it would seem to us, of course, natural that through the processes of consultation they will hear our point of view. What they will do with respect to that is their own sovereign decision. But there are enough blocs in the world without our attempting to organize another one. We are talking about an attitude, a spirit, a sense of cooperation. We are prepared to give it effect through actions which I have explained both in my public speech and in the private sessions, but we are not asking for a juridical system, and that idea has never been put forward by the American delegation.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, two of the things you came here to discuss — the energy crisis and US policy toward the Middle East — I wonder if you could look ahead to the trip you have coming up in two days and tell us as specifically as you can what you hope to accomplish? Tell us what effect or added difficulty the uncertainty in the Israeli Government has?

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: With all respect, I believe that to this group I should answer primarily the questions that concern the Conference. Briefly, what I put before my colleagues was our view of where the international situation stood. The Middle East was only one of the topics which also included the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks and our general approach to foreign policy. So, what I expect to accomplish in the Middle East I think I should leave for another press conference. Primarily it is to get talks started between Syria and Israel.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you have been characterized as the great eliminator of the failures of the foreign policy of your country. What is the reason, then, of your coming here to present to the Foreign Ministers, as if it were a new concept, the thesis of the hemispheric community which is exactly the same as Pan-Americanism, inter-Americanism and the Alliance for Progress, which are the oldest skeletons kept in the closet of the Department of State?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I have come here in response to the request of many of the colleagues from the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in order to express what the United States is willing to do in response to their concerns. Our proposals and their future depend entirely on our colleagues from Latin America and the Caribbean. There will be no American pressure to implement any of the proposals which we have made. And indeed if you analyze our proposals, the vast majority of them concern complaints that have been made about our actions, and there have been very few reciprocal requests we have made of our colleagues from Latin America and the Caribbean. It is our conviction that the great problem of the world today, the big problem of world peace, is to bring about a structure in the world in which the nations of the world feel they have had a share in building it and therefore they have an obligation to help maintain it. It can be brought about only through dialogue and consensus. It cannot be brought about by pressure. Then one has to ask oneself, in the name of what are we meeting and for what purpose? This is the objective of this Conference. It is our intention to go beyond the formulas of previous periods to a living reality. That living reality can make sense only if it has the willing support growing out of its own convictions of our friends in Latin America and the Caribbean. I can say flatly there will be no American pressure, direct or indirect, to bring it about.

QUESTION: Alright, I'll repeat the question, Sir. If this is not an OAS Conference, in the spirit of what you have been talking about as the Western community and the cooperative efforts of the countries, is there any plan or was there anything discussed with the Ministers and with you related to Canada and Cuba being invited in the future?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: There was discussion of both problems. The US of course has no objection to the participation of Canada. For the purposes of this Conference, while we listen with respect to the views expressed by some of our colleagues, we believe that the primary objective of this Conference was to introduce a new spirit and a new dialogue into the relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean. As for the US, we did not believe this would be an appropriate forum to discuss Cuba.

QUESTION: Who is responsible for the definite resolution that would permit American automobile companies established in Argentina to sell cars to Cuba and when will it be able to obtain a definite resolution?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The issue of the sale by American companies licensed in foreign countries, specifically Argentina, to Cuba is now under study in the United States Government. No final determination has been made, and of course when it is made we will discuss it first with the Government of Argentina. But no final decision has been made.

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QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, I understand that you have reiterated your commitment to the Latin American and Caribbean foreign ministers over a consultation with them for any possible future change in the US position toward Cuba. Can you now elaborate to the point of telling us whether this will be a personal consultation in the form of a committee or meeting, or if this will be just a notification to them of an impending change?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The form of consultation has not been decided, but it will be something other than the notification of an impending change. Those countries that have taken a position similar to ours are entitled to express their views in case there are any other considerations on the part of the United States Government.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, the United Nations recognized last year that there was a colonial status in Puerto Rico. What form will your new dialogue with that American colony take?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Of course the United States does not accept the proposition that Puerto Rico has colonial status, and I do not believe this is an appropriate subject for this dialogue.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, do you think that the commitment signed in Tlatelolco by the Latin American ministers will start a permanent political and economic dialogue of justice in America?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: It is our belief that a political and economic dialogue with Latin America and the Caribbean is very important. We are prepared to undertake with open mind and to give very serious consideration to the concerns of Latin America and the Caribbean, and we are confident that this will be one of the results of this meeting here in Mexico.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you have spoken so warmly of the spirit of this conference also with the Europeans — the Western Europeans — and would you like to recommend it for continuing Atlantic dialogue?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Of course, each relationship has its historical mood and its particular necessities, but I would think that the spirit that has been shown here, with the differences that exist, and I must say with all the legacy of the past, is one that was very positive, and the general attitude of mutual respect and open discussion is one that we are of course prepared to follow in relations with our European allies. I tend to believe the Europeans are ready to some extent, but the difference is that the machinery in relation to our European allies is more formalized, and this permitted here a more informal discussion which was [completely] useful.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, if the Conference of Foreign Relations Ministers is of a regional nature and it has a local importance for this Hemisphere, what would its importance be in the world scene?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Of course, the United States is committed to easing tensions wherever it is within our power to do so and independent of any other relationship that exists in this hemisphere. Nevertheless, to the extent that we can contribute in any conference or in any forum to a world which is built on consensus, where the nations of the world feel that they have a stake and where the dialogue is based on mutual respect for dignity of all nations, it must contribute to the general peace in the world.

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QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, to get back to Western Europe and Latin America for a moment, considering the events of the last year — your AP speech, the speech before the AP writers last April, the meeting with Mr. Pompidou, the European negotiations and now the meeting here — has your experience here at this Conference made you reexamine the desire of countries in Western Europe and different Latin American pressures for bilateral relations of their own on an extensive basis and to have broad access to international forums such as the United Nations?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No, I believe that inevitably in any dialogue with other countries there is a tendency to emphasize those issues on which there is controversy. With respect to Western Europe, the basic principles that we thought should be expressed about the relationship across the Atlantic will be concluded within the next few weeks and will result in the kind of document that we had in mind. With respect to Latin America, we aim for a much less formal procedure because Latin America is not as organized as a unit as Europe is and because our historical relationship has been somewhat different. Inevitably, the concern of different parts of the world in local foreign policy varies, and inevitably the most intensive dialogues that are possible are on those issues that are of most immediate concern to the countries involved and that too differs as between Western Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, but no one ever supposed that to move from a two-power world to a world in which many nations are attempting to play a role — and many regions are attempting to organize themselves — no one ever thought that this could be expressed in one document or that a day would come when you could say this process is completed. It has to be a living process, and dealing with free people, a complicated process — and we think that it is one that has to be continued and will be continued.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, could you tell us which is your personal attitude toward the reunion of Cuba to the Organization of American States?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I have stated the United States position with respect to this on many previous occasions, and we believe that this issue can only be addressed in a wider context and not at this particular moment.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, could you tell us what would be the immediate steps to start the implementation of the points discussed in this Conference and which would be the main economic, political, social, historical, or legal obstacles to be conquered, in order to achieve the purpose of this Conference?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Of course, the basic objective of this Conference was to introduce a new spirit into inter-American relations. I believe that that has been achieved. Then, the problem is how to give effect to this new spirit in a series of complete fields. Some of these fields are extremely complicated: the issue of transnational corporations; the issue of investment issues and how to deal with them; the issue of how we can take account of the concern in Latin America and the Caribbean with respect to American legislation such as the Hickenlooper-Gonzalez amendment and how this concern relates to some of the investment issues. All of this cannot possibly be settled at this meeting. However, we have agreed that on the occasion of the OAS meeting the Foreign Ministers meeting here will meet again in an informal atmosphere and continue our deliberations on issues on which we never expected to come to a final conclusion here. Other issues, such as the concept of economic collective security, which is of great concern in Latin America and the Caribbean, is one whose basic objectives the United States can accept; but, having stated it, the problem is how to give it concrete meaning. The United States has agreed already last September, and has reiterated here, that the concept put forward by the President of Mexico for a Charter of Economic Rights and Duties can be a useful instrument by which the nations

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of the world and the nations of the Hemisphere can be put into practice to this aspiration for economic security and progress, by which the rights and obligations of all nations can be expressed. That too is a process that will continue in truth at the next meeting of the UN committee and will be perhaps completed at the sessions of the General Assembly in the fall.

So there are many points before us. For example, the US has offered at this meeting that we study and give special attention to the petitions made by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for inclusion in our list after the Trade Act has passed. However, the Trade Act remains to be passed. We have offered consultations prior to various international negotiations such as the multilateral trade negotiations and to take the Latin American and Caribbean points of view into account during the negotiations. We have agreed in principle here. It has to be put into practice later. And let me say right now, however eloquent* or however vague the final declaration that emerges here, all of us here have been to enough international conferences to know that the documents are soon forgotten if they are not turned into a living reality, and if they do not lead to a new spirit and a new attitude.

The test of what we achieve here is not the assessment of our final declaration which we are certain will be satisfactory, but rather our ability to put in practice what I have tried to describe here and therefore some of the decisions will be taken in the months and years ahead.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, in 1965 the US intervened militarily in the Dominican Republic in response to military action that occurred there. If a similar thing were to occur, would you support an invasion of North American troops onto Dominican soil?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I stated in my opening address two things that should be kept in mind: (1) the US will not interfere in the domestic affairs of its sister republics, and (2) what we say here counts.

I'll take two more questions.

QUESTION: Returning to the matter of the sale of automobiles from Argentina, do you believe that the US has the right to make a decision in this case? Doesn't this constitute a violation of the sovereignty of Argentina?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The issue that has to be considered is the relationship of a decision of the Organization of American States. The general legislation of the US with respect to companies with headquarters in the US and the sovereign right of a country to determine its own laws, I discussed this issue with the Foreign Minister of Argentina in a spirit of attempting to find a constructive solution, and until we have made a decision that we can communicate to the Argentine Government which it has a total sovereign right to accept or reject, I do not think it would be appropriate for me to engage in a public debate. But I do want to say that the discussions that took place between us were in a spirit of co-operation and friendship.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you have just stated that the US will not intervene in the internal affairs of any Latin American country. Does this mean that in this meeting there will be changes or that the Mutual Military Aid Treaty will be abrogated between the United States and the Latin American countries?

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: Of course, this depends on many things. We would not interpret treaties that have been freely entered into by sovereign countries as an interference in their domestic affairs. As I pointed out in my speech, there are a number of realities that we all have to face. The US, by its size, its weight, its power, is inevitably going to affect the Latin American and Caribbean countries. The conduct of foreign policy of any nation to some extent involves an attempt to influence the action of other nations. It is true of the foreign policy Latin America and the Caribbean accords us, and so it is of our foreign policy toward them. What I have tried to say here is that we will not attempt to make our foreign policy depend on a particular domestic structure of individual countries; that, beyond what is implicit in the relationship of nations to each other that I have just defined, we will not interfere in the domestic affairs of other states; and that our objective is to bring about a world in which the nations feel that it is also their world and not one that has been imposed upon them. But that is a monumental task that will take many years to achieve and in which, after all, the nations themselves can judge for themselves whether this reflects their real aspirations or not.

Thank you very much.

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